

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05

L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SR-02 ORM-01 AID-05 EB-04 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /069 W

----- 115635

R 241007Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4666

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 4828

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, BG

SUBJ: PAK-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

REF: A. DACCA 4608; B. DACCA 2966

SUMMARY: TALK WITH BENGALIEE FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL AGAIN CONFIRMS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT PROGRESS TOWARD SETTLEMENT OUTSTANDING ISSUES WITH PAKISTAN REMAINS HALTED. BENGALIEES SEE PAKISTANI UNPREDICTABILITY AS CHIEF PROBLEM. BANGALIEES REMAIN READY TO SEEK SOLUTION THROUGH ACCOMMODATION BUT HAVE NO PRESENT REASON TO THINK RESUMPTION OF SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS LIE IN EARLY OFFING. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR SUBCONTINENTAL AFFAIRS KAISER MURSHED ON OCTOBER 23, HE CONFIRMED TO EMBOFF THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN HAVE NOT MOVED FORWARD SINCE PRIMIN BHUTTO'S LATE JUNE VISIT TO DACCA. THERE NO SIGNS EVIDENT TO BENGALIEES THAT PAKISTANIS PRESENTLY INTERESTED IN ADDRESSING OUTSTANDING ISSUES OF DIVISION OF ASSETS AND REPATRIATION OF BIHARIS.

2. RE DIVISION OF ASSETS, MURSHED SAID THAT BANGLADESH FINDS PAKISTANI APPROACH TO ISSUES CHARACTERIZED BY SEEMING UNPREDIC-
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TABILITY. HE SAID THAT DURING COURSE OF APRIL, 1974 MEETINGS WHICH RESULTED IN TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, BENGALIEES HAD PROPOSED

TO PAKISTANIS THAT ISSUE BE FIRST CONSIDERED AT OFFICIAL LEVEL. IT WAS BDG VIEW THAT THIS WOULD PERMIT PROMPT DETERMINATION--AND DIVISION--OF READILY IDENTIFIABLE AND QUANTIFIABLE ASSETS SUCH AS GOLD HOLDINGS OF STATE BANK OF PAKISTAN AND EQUIPMENT OF PUBLIC CORPORATIONS LIKE PIA AND NATIONAL SHIPPING CORPORATION. RE LESS EASILY IDENTIFIABLE/QUANTIFIABLE ASSETS, NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE REQUIRED, POSSIBLY EVEN AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL, BUT FACT THAT SOME PORTION OF ASSETS COULD BE TRANSFERRED RELATIVELY PROMPTLY TO BANGLADESH WOULD MEET BDG'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL NEEDS REGARDING THIS MATTER.

3. MURSHED SAID AZIZ AHMED HAD COUNTERED THIS PROPOSAL BY SAYING THAT ALL ASPECTS OF ISSUE REQUIRED A "POLITICAL SOLUTION" WHICH ONLY MUJIB AND BHUTTO COULD ACHIEVE. BENGALIS ACCEPTED THIS AND, THUS, BHUTTO'S Dacca VISIT WAS SEEN AS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT. WHEN IT TOOK PLACE AND BENGALIS TOLD THAT MATTER WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED FIRST BY OFFICIALS AND NONE OF THOSE NEEDED FOR TASK WERE INCLUDED IN THE PAKISTANI DELEGATION, THE BENGALIS FELT BETRAYED.

4. MURSHED DID NOT LINGER ON SUBJECT OF DIVISION OF LIABILITIES, BUT LEFT IMPRESSION THAT BDG TENDS TO SEE THIS AS MATTER WHICH BASICALLY DE MINIMIS. IT APPEARS THAT BDG TENDS TO CONCEIVE OF LIABILITIES AS LIMITED TO EXTERNAL DEBT AND THAT GOP IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY DOMESTIC OBLIGATIONS WHICH RAISED PRIOR TO MARCH, 1971. IN THIS SETTING, IT APPEARS THAT BDG CONCLUDES PRESENT PROCESS OF SORTING OUT EXTERNAL DEBT TAKES CARE OF PROBLEM.

5. TURNING TO BIHARIS, MURSHED SAID BDG FEELS THAT PAKISTAN AGAIN DISPLAYS UNPREDICTABILITY. COMMENTING ON THE OPERATION OF THE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, HE SAID GOP HAS YET TO FULFILL ITS OBLIGATIONS IN TERMS OF BOTH LETTER AND SPIRIT. RE FORMER, HE SAID THAT PAKISTAN HAS FAILED TO ARRANGE FOR TRANSPORTATION OF 12,000 BIHARIS WHOM IT HAS ALREADY CLEARED. RE LATTER, MURSHED OFFERED VIEW THAT LANGUAGE OF TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT (VIDE PARAGRAPH 12) INTENDS FAR GREATER FLEXIBILITY AND LIBERALITY THAN PAKISTANIS HAVE SO FAR PROVEN WILLING TO DISPLAY.

6. MURSHED SAID THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION IS ESPECIALLY VEXING
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TO MUJIB. THE PRIMIN FELT THAT HIS DECISION TO DROP WAR CRIMES TRIALS WAS A MAJOR CONCESSION AND HAD ASSERTED IN THE PRESENCE OF MURSHED THAT HE HAD NEVER BEFORE ABANDONED A COMMITMENT. MURSHED ADDED THAT MUJIB HAD SEEN THIS ACTION AS INVOLVING POLITICAL RISKS DOMESTICALLY BUT HAD DECIDED THAT IT WOULD PROMPT PAKISTAN TO BE MUCH MORE FLEXIBLE. IN THE AFTERMATH OF BHUTTO'S Dacca VISIT, THE PRIMIN FEELS THAT HE MISCALCULATED GRAVELY.

7. IN CLOSING, MURSHED REITERATED VIEW THAT BANGLADESH STANDS READY TO MOVE FORWARD. HE ADDED THAT BENGALIS HAD HAD

CONVERSATIONS WITH PAKISTANIS IN NEW YORK AT UNITED NATIONS
BUT EVERYTHING REMAINS IN ABEYANCE FOR THE MOMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT, FOREIGN RELATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974DACCA04828
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740304-0840
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741021/aaaaardz.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A. DACCA 4608; B. DACCA 2966
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUL 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <11 MAR 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PAK-BANGLADESH RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, BG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005